



Grant County VSP Meeting

Meeting Minutes

2/16/2023 – 10:00 AM

Teleconference

Attendance: Chris Young (Grant County), Eric Pentico (WDFW), Levi Keesecher (WSCC), Dan Dormier (Hartline Producer)

CBCD Staff: Harold Crose, Britton Baker, Deanna Elliott, Elliott DeLong

Call to Order and Introductions: Meeting called to order at 10:01 AM. All parties introduced themselves (See attendance)

Public Input: None

Approval of January 2023 Grant County VSP Minutes: Corrections – None

Motion by D. Dormier to Approve January 2023 Grant County VSP Working Group Minutes.
Seconded by H. Crose. Motion Carries

Reports:

Quarterly: The Grant County VSP Quarterly report is due in April and will need approval from the Working Group before Submitting. It will cover the Calendar from January 2023-March 2023 and must be submitted by April 10,2023.

General:

Monitoring: A significant portion of the Grant VSP work is focused on the Crab Creek Corridor and the Lower Crab Creek WIRA as a whole. Additional focus within the area will look at the critical Aquifer recharge areas to tie into work being completed in the Odessa Subarea. A completed monitoring plan has is being developed and will be completed by the January 2024 deadline.

Training: CBCD staff have been training with Doug Allen and Lyle Stoltman on soils and nutrient management processes used in eastern Washington, these are internal trainings however, NRCs staff from the Ephrata office have also participated in the programs. In March 2023, Irrigation Water Management training will be conducted by H. Crose and D. Allen. Staff is also being encouraged to look into NRCS and other partner agencies to continue to seek beneficial training for the district.

Work Group: Moving forward with the Grant County Working Group, there maybe a need to develop a recruitment plan and a retention system for working group members. The working group was affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic and has been a decline in participation and diversity. The working group may also need to take into consideration equity and diversity demographics (i.e., minority, female and under served groups) into account as the working group continues to evolve and develop.



Projects:

Cost Share: Currently two cost shares are active using Grant VSP funds. One is a replacement of a pivot on a pasture outside Warden. The farm operator has been flood-irrigating since the original pivot went out of commission.

The second cost share covers a pivot that is well beyond the expected lifetime in the Ephrata area. The pivot currently operating is worn and is not longer meeting efficiency. The fund for the project come directly to the state as additional program funds.

OGWRP: The PL-566 agreement with East Columbia Basin Irrigation District (ECBID) has seen significant progress. Farmer Conservation Alliance has been contracted to complete the necessary documents for the watershed plan (GAAP, NEPA etc.) under contract with CBCD. Additional funding will become more readily available. Office of the Columbia River will be providing funds and there is a possibility to apply for Climate Smart funding

Shrub Steppe: Development of a shrub steppe mitigation plan with Grant County is ongoing. Easements, Conservation Leases and Shrub steppe banks have been explored as possible programs. Currently the process will focus on improving the existing Shrub steppe in Grant County.

New Projects:

SFF Program: The Washington State Conservation Commission has additional funds through Sustainable Farms and Fields program. Due to the short timeframe to fiscal year, and VSP projects funded will need to be equipment based or shovel ready for the fund to meet the fiscal year timeline. More projects are likely to be identified within the coming month.

CBCD participated in the program to develop a rental program to support the smaller producers in the county. CBCD will have a small no-till drill to rental by the small producers that have need for the equipment but funds may be limited.

Outreach:

VSP Article: CBCD is working on an article highlighting VSP within the county. CBCD is also working on having more information and outreach newsletters in the future focus on the district's activities including VSP

Final Thoughts

Legislative Sessions: The Legislative session has been proposal of a bill to expand the VSP program on a state wide level. This includes funding increase and the expansion of the enrollment process for Counties wanting to enroll in the Future. This shows that the VSP program as a whole is robust and healthy and will likely have a sufficient footing going into the 10-year reporting period.



Adjournment- The meeting adjourned at 10:53 AM. Next Grant County VSP working Group Meeting will be April 6th, 2023 from 10-12.